

Other things to do in London

By Linda Laws
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We all know about the Tower of London, Buckingham Palace, the Houses of Parliament, etc. etc.

Let's look this week at the other opportunities and activities London can offer the visitor.

London Dungeon

The London Dungeon is not for the faint-hearted. Two new attractions are being offered at the London Dungeon, the "horror" museum of London. A hi-tech ride called "Judgment Day Sentenced to Death" recreates the grim journey to execution in the 18th century. Unsuspecting visitors are sentenced to death and taken by barge along an eerie waterway, through a replica of Traitor's Gate at the Tower for their appointment with the executioner.

The second feature is an exhibition "under siege" which shows a medieval city in the last hours of struggle. Dramatic sound and lighting effects and full-size models are used to show devastation, disease and a trail of destruction, including fire, torture and death.

The dungeon is located near London Bridge and is open daily. Admission is £8.50 for adults and £5.50 for children under 14. Call (0171) 403 7221 for more information.

Oscar Wilde's London

In the late 19th century, playwright Oscar Wilde frequented the Cafe Royal, a complex of bars and restaurants which can still be visited in Regent Street. Wilde's home from 1884-95 was in Tite Street, Chelsea. London Walks offer a costumed Oscar Wilde character guide walking tour of "his" London each Saturday. People should meet at Green Park Underground at 11 a.m.

Black Taxi Tours

London cabbies are renowned for their extensive knowledge of the city. Black Taxi

Tours now offer two-hour trips in the comfort of a licensed cab, with a driver who is also a qualified guide. The tour includes a full commentary of factual information together with fascinating anecdotes and travelers' tales, and the driver stops for photographs. The cost is not cheap at £65 but each taxi can take up to five passengers. To book, call (0171) 289 4371 or (01956) 384124.

'China Tea' Exhibition

On the famous Cutty Sark clipper ship moored at Greenwich (King William Walk) you will find the Twinings "China Tea" Exhibition illustrating the history of the development of tea, from the arrival of tea in England in the 17th century to tea drinking today. There are many artifacts, including tea chests, original historic documents, a range of teapots and antique tea caddies through the ages. It's open from 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays and from noon - 6 p.m. Sundays. Admission is £3.50 for adults and £2.50 for children.

Summer holiday fun

From July 19 - Sept. 1, the London Transport Museum has many events for children during the school holidays. Activities include crafts workshops, stories, songs, face-painting, carnival costume workshops and puppet shows. For details, call (0171) 379 6344. Admission is £4.50 for adults, £2.50 for children and free for children under five. A ticket for a family of two adults and two children is £11. The museum is located in Covent Garden.

Regents Park Open Air Theatre

Regents Park Open Air Theatre's summer season includes Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "All's Well That Ends Well," the Cole Porter musical "Kiss Me Kate" and an adaptation of "Watership Down" for children. Performances are at 8 p.m. Mondays - Saturdays. Matinees are at 2:30 p.m. Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Tickets range from £8-19.50. For details, call (0171) 486 2431. Performances are at the Open Air Theatre, Inner Circle, Regent's Park. The nearest tube station is Baker Street.

Dinosaur Rock

It's 8 million B.C. and the reporter and photographer on the Prehistoric Times stumble upon the scoop of their lives when they visit the valley of the dinosaurs. Dance in the aisles to the dino-rhythm and sing along with pterodactyl pop-star Pterodonna. This all happens from June 12 -

Aug. 16 at the Polka Theatre for Children, 240 The Broadway, London SW19. Tickets are £6.80 for adults and £5 for concessions. For details, call (0181) 543 4888. The nearest tube station is Wimbledon.

London's Free Festival

London's Free Festival begins June 1 with the installation of an eight-metre sculpture on the South Bank and ends with a fireworks display Sept. 14. The 1997 Coin Street Festival on the south side of the river between Waterloo and Blackfriars Bridges includes a celebration of culture from Greece (June 1), India (August 17) and a Latin American fiesta (June 29). The finale is Sept. 14 and includes a spectacular feat by two wirewalkers who will undertake a 400-metre walk from opposite banks of the River Thames, 30 metres above the water.

The Rainforest Cafe

Late June sees the opening of Europe's first Rainforest Cafe when a bit of the tropical rainforest comes to London. The cafe features lush vegetation, tropical birds, thunder and lightning, life-size crocodiles, fluttering butterflies and other wildlife set among a backdrop of colourful aquaria and waterfalls. It's located in Shaftesbury Avenue near Piccadilly Circus and it serves pastas, sandwiches, salads, meat and fish. For more information, call (0171) 434 3111.

Covent Garden Flower Festival

Once famous for its fruit, flower and vegetable market, Covent Garden is now a shopping and dining area. It will be transformed for its first flower festival June 22 - 29. This free event will include floral decorations, vertical gardens, window boxes and hanging baskets. Outside St. Paul's Church in the Performance Garden a stage will be set up for street theatre, music dance and demonstrations.

Up-market B&B

Uptown Reservations have 60 host homes in elegant town houses and large mansion flats in Kensington, Knightsbridge, Chelsea and Bloomsbury offering bed and continental breakfast at £55 per night for a single room with private bathroom or £75 for two people sharing. For information and reservations, call (0171) 351 3445. Bed and Breakfast (GB) also has 60 hosts offering bed and breakfast in the London area from £19.50 to £49.50 per night. For a free copy of the guide write to Bed and Breakfast (GB), P.O. Box 66, Bell Street, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon RG9 1XS. For more information, call (01491) 578803.



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